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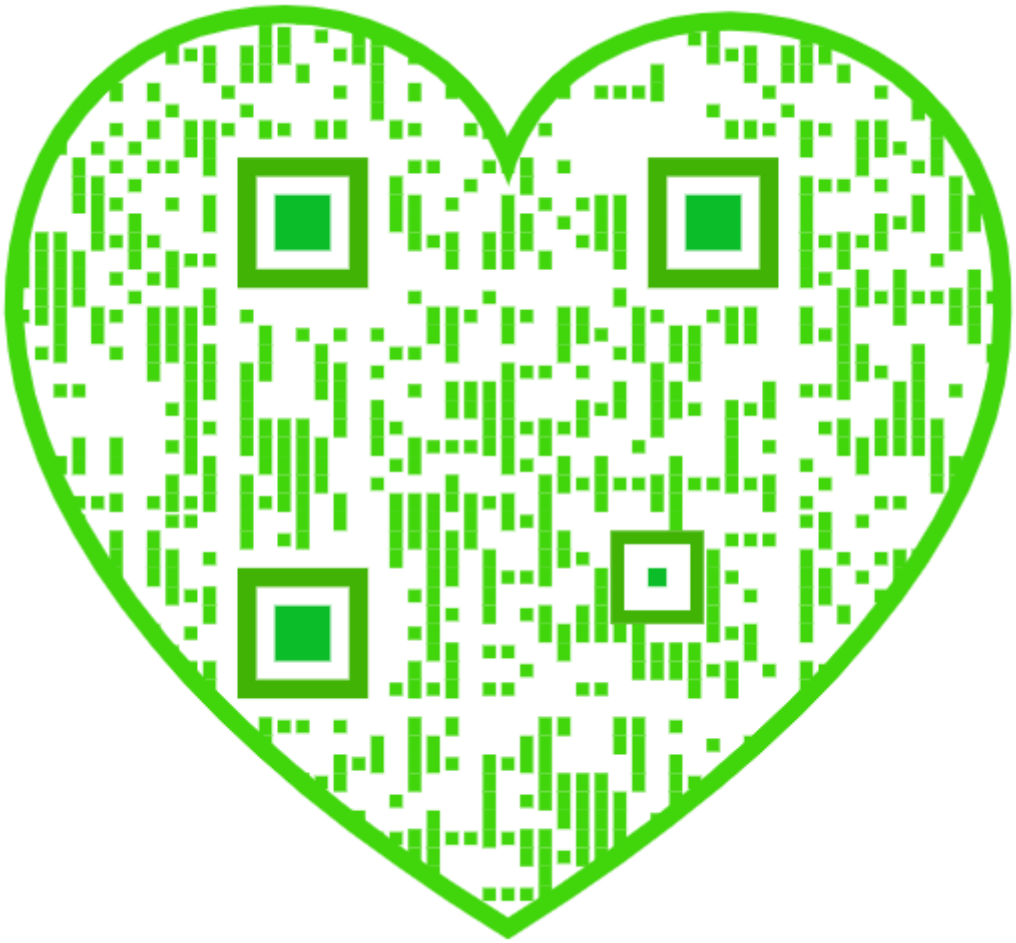
How Christmas was Kept in Heaven

Rev. Norman Plass



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How Christmas Was Kept in Heaven

How Christmas Was Kept in Heaven

BY

REV. NORMAN PLASS

AUTHOR OF "BUDS THAT BLOOM ON BONNIER BANKS"

"Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them."—*The Apocalypse.*

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DEDICATED

TO MY LITTLE SON

RAYMOND BENEDICT

GOD-SENT FROM HEAVEN A MESSENGER OF

JOY TO LONELY HEARTS

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How Christmas Was Kept in Heaven

A GROUP of children are gathered together
  Who have passed from earth to heaven this year;
They are eagerly chatting, and questioning whether
  The Birth of the Christ they hold so dear
Will be observed in the realms of heaven
  As it was last year upon the earth,
When tokens that gladden the heart were given,
  And all was festivity, joy and mirth.

"MY children dear," speaks an angel near,
"If you would know, to me give ear
  And all your doubts will I remove."
  It is Agapé the Angel of Love.

"What you have called the Birth of Christ
  Is to us the day He sacrificed
    The glories He had had with God,
    And chose the path by mortals trod.

It brought to earth a reign of peace,
But wrought in heaven our joy's decrease;
Gladness to you did it impart,
But pain and grief to God's fond heart;
Of what you gained was He bereft,
For at His side was no child left;
And heaven was lorn when Christ was gone,
For in God's love He stood alone.

"But since He sought the earth below
To sound the depths of human woe
And tread the press of wrath alone,
That for man's sin He might atone,
Angels who blessed His name before
With endless anthems now adore;
And saints whose souls His deeds redeem
Make His acclaim their constant theme.
But be assured we celebrate
The time that marks a deed so great;
Tomorrow comes the day you prize,—
It is 'The Day of Sacrifice.'"

THE morrow dawned. Not such a dawning as is known
To mortals on the earth beneath when night has flown,

For night comes not in heaven and hence
does not recede;
Where none grow weary, rest and slumber
none can need;
They who are serving in God's temple
night and day
Mark not a shadow's fall nor note its
flight away.

Yet when the morning came, a brighter
radiance shone
Forth from the face of God and round
about the throne;
The streets and walls stood out in stronger
gleams of light,
And every jewel flashed with scintillations
bright.
Renewed alertness was apparent
everywhere,
For mortals were astir and needed
special care.

It is the dawning of the morning—
The Anniversary Day—
When Christ came forth from heaven
And hope to earth was given.

We sing the story of the glory
That He aside did lay,
That He might come in meekness
To be our strength in weakness.

It is the voicing of rejoicing
That drives all care away,
For Christ dispels our sadness
And sheds forth joy and gladness.

But 'mid the praises earth upraises
The saints in heaven hold sway;
In radiant light they glisten;
Let earth be still and listen.

A COUNTLESS host that none can name,
Of every tribe and tongue,
In white array before the Lamb
Join in their triumph song:

"Salvation to our God belongs,
Who sitteth on the throne;
And endless praises to the Lamb,
Whose deeds for sin atone."

Then angels standing round the throne
Upon their faces fall,
And bowing low before their God
Exalt Him Lord of all:

"May blessing, glory, wisdom be
Unto our sovereign Lord;
Thanksgiving, honor, power and might,"—
They chant with sweet accord.

Then all respond with loudest praise
That rings through Paradise;
It is the welcome heaven gives
The Day of Sacrifice:

"We sing the praise
Of Him who lays
His heavenly glory by,
And goes to earth
Through humble birth,
Its tasks to glorify.

"Tempted was He
As man must be,
That He might lend him aid;
In time of grief
He brought relief,—
'Tis I, be not afraid.'

"The thorns He wore,
The cross He bore,
Rejection was His lot;
For man He died,
The Crucified,
Himself regarded not.

"We mark the day
He went away,
Its memory preserve;
We praise His name
With loud acclaim,
And in that name we serve."

THEN all are silent, and awaiting stand
As though some special message to receive;
God gives to each a mission to achieve—
Angel and saint alike—in every land.

Quickly they turn and gladly haste away;
To hovel and to palace door they speed
To minister to human woe and need
Where'er the curse of sin holds regal sway.

Their flight so fleet
They joyous beat,
And speed the way of weary feet.

Burdens they lift
With mercy swift,
And deck woe-clouds with shining rift.

The sick they bless,
The sad caress,
And fill each soul with happiness.

Fond hope bestow
Where'er they go,
And set each heart with joy aglow.

Behold them ranging earth's domain,
Where to each home they access gain
As noiselessly as taps the rain
Of Summer 'gainst the window-pane.

Hither and yon each swiftly darts,
Soothing life's sharp and biting smarts,
Bearing a balm to bleeding hearts,
Healing earth's woes by heaven's best arts.

WHEN they are gone Agapé waits—
She only left behind;
God turns to her and indicates
Her welcome task assigned:

"Your work is with your children friends,
To show the happy way
In which the host of heaven spends
What they call Christmas Day.

"Be sure to have them comprehend
That deeds of sacrifice
Will everywhere the day attend
Which they so greatly prize.

"Let them engage in works of love,
And lead them to achieve,
That far more blessed it may prove
To give than to receive."

When Agapé heard the message
She with joy began her task;
Gathering the children round her,
First inquired what they would ask;
Then to satisfy the longing
Of each little throbbing heart,
With them all atrailing after
Did at once for earth depart:
Went with them to every Kingdom;
Showed them men in every State;
Showed them where the lowly dwelleth;
Showed the palace of the great;

Showed them joy and showed them sorrow;
  Showed them gain and showed them loss;
Showed them that what men most seek for
  Is in heaven's sight but dross;
Showed them how the heavenly message
  God had sent to earth that day
By each messenger was carried
  To each heart without delay;
Let them see how it was welcomed,
  Or was spurned by bitter hearts,
And how what to one brings gladness
  To another grief imparts;
Let them see that while on Christmas
  All without is joy and mirth,
Many, many a heart is burdened
  With a grief that bows to earth.
Then she told them they might scatter
  To whatever points they chose,
And might do what most they longed to
  That would lighten human woes;
But when night began to gather,
  They should speed to Paradise
And relate what they had witnessed
  On the Day of Sacrifice.

Thus released they sped away;
And their hearts were doubly glad
For each child a message had
For some friend that Christmas Day.
So each on his mission hasted,
Not a moment to be wasted.

One went to see a lady
Who kind to him had been
Because he was an outcast,—
The child of many a sin.

He said: "Through what you taught me
In heaven now I'm safe;
God bless your soul this Christmas
Because you loved a waif.

"I thought you'd like to know it
That happy you might be,
And kind to other outcasts
As you were kind to me."

She heard the words of comfort,
Forgot her friends at home,
Went forth to seek the lost ones
Wherever they might roam;

Told them that Christ the Saviour
In love for them had died;
And through what her lips taught them
Their souls were satisfied.

One went to a home of sorrow
Where a mother was weeping sore
Because God had taken the baby
That on her breast she bore;
Her heart overflowed with anguish,
For "God has been cruel," she said;
She nourished her thoughts of rebellion
And would not be comforted.

The one who comes now is the loved one
Whom God had taken away;
She had longed for his blessed presence
For many and many a day.
But now while she sits complaining
That Christmas can have no joy,
She feels in her arms so empty
The form of her baby boy.

He rests there as once he was resting
When God came and took him away,
Only now he looks so enraptured
She dares not ask that he stay.

How blessed to have him with her,
To feel his dear head on her breast!
But she would no longer detain him
Away from the land of the blest.

So he flits away from her vision;
She throws him a kiss as he goes;
Sweet peace possesses her bosom;
With rapture her heart overflows.
Her sorrow has not departed,
There are moments of sadness and pain,
But now she turns her eyes upward
Away from her loss to his gain.

One visited a home where poverty
Ground down the inmates to the last degree,
Where flickering faith declined to longer stay,
And love had almost found the path away;
Where all was want and ruin and despair,
Without fond hope intruding anywhere.
He came to bring that hope, that faith restore,
To bid that love abide forevermore.
He pointed to the Christ, and bade endure
Through thought of Him who on the earth was poor.

They bade Christ enter, and the blessing brought
In heart and home a transformation wrought;
And then in place of craven want and fear
There was enthroned the angel of good cheer.

One went to cheer a drunkard,
Who stood on ruin's brink
Because he could not conquer
His burning thirst for drink.

Sitting upon a curbing
Within an alley-way,
His heart was filled with moanings
That merry Christmas Day.

"Cheer up, O man," a voice said:
"There's no room for despair;
I have just come from heaven
And want to see you there.

"Many a time you've fallen,
Alone you cannot stand,
But Jesus Christ can help you—
Just let Him take your hand.

"He is the friend of sinners,
He knows your every need;
Look up to Him in weakness
And you'll be strong indeed."

The drunkard heard, and summoned
What will-power still remained;
Throwing himself on Jesus,
The victory he gained.

One hasted to see his father,
Whose soul was sorely rent
Because from the realm of spirits
God's messenger was sent
To take from the earth forever
The only son that he had;
Now he was bowed in bereavement,
And his heart was lonely and sad.

The face of the boy was clouded
As to the father he came;
As the father's look was somber,
The child's reflected the same.
"I am grieved, my dearest father,
To see your heart so sad;
If you knew my joy in heaven
I am sure you would be glad.

"I am happier far than I could be
On earth with every joy;
Beyond the power of the Tempter,
My peace is without alloy;
More useful far to the Master
Than I on earth could be,
My life is a stream of gladness
That flows through eternity."

The father saw how selfish
The thought of his heart had been;
He had lost sight of the blessing
In the blindness of grief within.
"If God will forgive my weakness
As in penitence I come,
I will learn to rejoice that my loved one
Is safe in the heavenly home."

ONE went to a home where plenty reigned,
Where thought of want was not entertained;
But where there were hearts dissatisfied
Because they were ruled by selfish pride;
Where to get was the only object of living,
And none ever had the thought of giving.

He told of those who were poorly clad,
With countenance haggard and eyes that were sad;
He told of needs that were pressing sore;
Of hungry children that lived next door.
Like a Christ-child he stood rebuking their greed,
While pleading for those who were dying in need.

Their hearts were never so touched before;
They took at once of their bountiful store
And sent it abroad to every home
Where the specter of want could possibly come.
Such a glad Christmas Day there never had been
In the homes of the poor as there was then;
But gladdest of all were the hearts that gave heed
To the message of love that conquered their greed.

Thus the children, sent from heaven,
Went on messages of love;
Went to those they loved the dearest;
Turned their thoughts to things above;

Went in joy; returned in gladness;
In their hearts a sweet surprise;
Now they knew that choicest blessings
Lay in deeds of sacrifice.
Then rehearsed to one another,
While Agapé listened too,
What they saw the angels doing,
What they each were sent to do;
Told the blessings that were granted
To the friends to whom they went;
Told the hope, the joy, the comfort,
To each soul from heaven sent;
Thought that Christmas as earth knew it
Was not spent in any wise
With one-half as much of pleasure
As the Day of Sacrifice;
Praised the Saviour for His goodness
When He bade Agapé say
That the eternal years of heaven
Should be one glad Christmas Day.

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